



Chapter 33

Steering

*“Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in
the land and enjoy safe pasture.”*

PSALM 37:3

Our neighbors had asked us to feed their horses while they were away for the weekend. This allowed us the opportunity to enjoy an extra stretch of relaxation while admiring the uniqueness of the Texas countryside.

“Hold on, here we go. Youch! Here comes the last cattle guard, Alex, brace yourself,” I warned.

“That sure was a rough ride, Mom,” he grinned. “But where are the cattle?”

“It looks like there aren’t any cattle here, just a few horses,” I laughed.

Alex led the way from the car to the paddock, tromping through the mud that was left behind by the afternoon thunderstorm. Inside the paddock stood a small horse barn with two beautiful quarter horses peering out of the top gate of their stalls. They were neighing and snorting, *chomping at the bit*, waiting for their evening meal.

Inside the fenced-in paddock was a flat-bed trailer stacked high with hay. The sweet, strong smell of the hay made me think that the horses’ mouths must always water having to stare at the scrumptious hay all day. Once we were inside the paddock, Alex climbed on top of the hay stack.

“Mom, come on up here!”

“No thank you,” I said, “I’m just fine down here.” I walked over to the barn to pet the hungry horses.

“Mom, how am I going to get this hay out?” He stood triumphantly, looking down like a conquering mountain climber.

“What do you mean?” I walked over to the trailer and saw that the hay was wrapped tightly with baling twine. Looking around for something to cut it with, I could not find anything that would do. Feeding horses was a brand new adventure for city folk like us. With one big snap, Alex popped the twine with his bare hands and it fell to the ground.

“You’re so strong, Alex!” I called, beaming up at him.

Alex began dropping the large flakes of hay off the trailer. I picked up the flakes of hay and tossed them into the horses’ stalls. Their chomping let us know that they had already forgotten about us. Alex stood atop the haystack, looking to and fro across the horizon.

“Mom, it looks like there’s a big cow over there in the field,” he pointed. I walked closer to the trailer to try and see what he was talking about.

“It sure is—a really big cow!” I answered. Alex reached his hand down to help me climb up the heap so that I could get a better look. By now the large, lanky, quadruped was closer to us.

“Mother, look at that. The horns on that cow are so big he can barely walk. They must be four feet wide. It looks like his head is going to bob right off!” The big cow walked slowly, moping his way across the open field.

“It looks like he’s coming over here,” said Alex. Our neighbor had only told us about her prized horses, but she never mentioned any cattle. The cow with the huge horns had picked up his pace and was headed our way. By now we were both *wound up* and feeling the excitement of our Western adventure. Alex tugged on my arm to alert me.

“Look over there, Mom. There’s two more big cows headed right this way.”

“Alex, I suspect they smell the hay.”

Now three longhorns were headed in our direction, and we were suddenly outnumbered. We stayed on top of the trailer, watching those three pokey, heavy-headed cattle meander across the field. Before we knew it, like a bull’s-eye, there was a stream of longhorns headed straight for the stall.

“Look, there’s another one,” Alex counted. “Behind that tree,” he pointed. “And another one—ten, eleven, twelve,” he counted. He stopped counting at thirteen. There were thirteen big Texas Longhorns coming our way. They slowly made a line around the fence. By now, I was glad to be safe on top of the haystack. The cattle stood staring up at us.

“Mom, they want the hay,” Alex whispered.

“Yes, and I want to get out of here,” I nervously murmured. We remained on top of the haystack watching all thirteen longhorns dawdle in front of the large gate. The pathway out from the paddock to the car was blocked. In the meantime, the two horses were chomping away on their meal, never looking up even once.

“Mom, how are we going to get out of here?”

“Let’s stop for a second and think, Son. No, better yet, let’s pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can always have faith in you. We ask for your guidance and safety from this haystack to our car. Amen.”

“I know, Mom,” Alex suggested, “I’ll give them some hay.” That sounded like a good idea. Slipping away without first feeding them did not seem possible. The big cows looked very serious about their business.

“This is what I’ll do,” Alex explained. “I’ll take some hay and jump the fence to the other side of the paddock. Then, I’ll lead them away from the gate.” Wrenching my hands I listened to Alex explain his plan.

“I’ll trickle a trail of hay away from the gate, and “steer” them right back into the open field.”

“Oh, what a great idea, Alex. That makes perfect sense!”